Revival of Sponge Iron India Limited

*590. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD : Will the Minister of STEEL be pleased to state :

(a) whether worker's unions of Sponge Iron India Limited have submitted a proposal for revival of the Company; and

(b) if so, the reaction of Government to the proposal ?

THE MINISTER OF STEEL (SHRI DILIP RAY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The future course of action in regard to the Company will depend on a number of factors like the market scenario, recommendations of the Disinvestment Commission and the ability of the Company to sustain itself in the competitive environment.

Problems faced by Tea Industry

*591. SHRI KARNENDU BHATTACHARJEE : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is fact that the Tea Industry in India is currently facing serious problems all round;

(b) if so the, details thereof; and

(c) what steps are proposed to be taken to help the industry to face these challenges ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN): (a) and (b) After a year of shortfall in production and exports in 1999, the tea industry is currently showing improvement on the production front. Production of tea during January and February 2000 was 37.72 million kgs as compared to 36.23 million kgs in the corresponding period of the previous year. However, tea indusrty has suffered a set back in exports as well as in prices fetched at auction during the same period.

(c) Several steps have been taken by the Government/Tea Board for increasing production and export of tea. The steps taken to increase production include financial assistance by Tea Board to the tea industry through its various developmental schemes for encouraging extension planting, re-planting, rejuvenation pruning, infilling, creation of irrigation facilities and drainage etc.